

# TRANSACTIONS

OF THE

## SOUTH AFRICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

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NOTE ON PORTIONS OF THE CROSS OR MEMORIAL  
PILLAR ERECTED BY BARTHOLOMEW DIAZ NEAR  
ANGRA PEQUENA IN GERMAN SOUTH-WEST AFRICA.

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(Read January 26, 1898.)

### I.—INTRODUCTION.

Soon after taking up my appointment as Director of the Museum I found there a block of stone imbedded in a brick foundation which I was given to understand was a portion of the cross erected near Angra Pequena by Bartholomew Diaz, the first navigator who rounded the Cape of Good Hope.

Mr. Péringuey kindly made a note for me of all the information he was able to gather about this interesting relic, of which the following is the summary.

The existence of this cross first became known to the Cape Town public at the time of the discovery of the guano deposits on Ichaboe Island. Some of the crews of whalers or guano-loading vessels had, in a mad freak, broken the cross in two pieces. The interest was renewed at the time of the discovery of copper ore in Namaqualand and Damaraland, and Mr. De Pass and Captain Sinclair, who were at the time greatly interested in the guano islands, were instrumental in having the three pieces of the cross brought to Cape Town. This is confirmed by a note from the Museum records for the year 1856, in which the collections were first placed in the old Museum, to this effect :—

“ To Captain Carrew we are indebted for the remains of the cross

brought from Portugal, and planted by Bartholomew Diaz at Pedestal Point in 1486.”

The pieces were put together roughly in the form of a cross, and stood on the stoep at the entrance of the old Museum, and I have seen a reproduction of an old photograph representing the cross as it was in those days.

In 1865 Chevalier du Prat, one of the judges of the Mixed Commission, appointed to decide on the validity of slavers and their cargoes captured on the African coasts, and also apparently Consul for Portugal at the same time, made a claim for the cross on behalf of the King of Portugal. Loth to part with so interesting a relic, the trustees made a compromise, and the upper part with the cross piece was handed over to Chevalier du Prat to find its way to Lisbon, the lower part being retained in the Museum.

In the earlier part of the century the coasts of South Africa were surveyed by Captain Owen, R.N.\* He, on page 269 of vol. ii. of his narrative, states that he visited Angra Pequena, and there, on the top of a small granite eminence, found the remains of Diaz' cross, which was said to have been thrown down some forty years previously; subsequent visitors had replaced the original basal shaft in the ground again, which was then about six feet in height, and had placed other broken fragments on the shaft above to roughly restore the cross. The basal fragments were of marble, rounded on one side, square on the other for the insertion of an inscription now illegible. From the description given it does not seem to be very certain whether traces of the inscription, though now illegible, were distinctly seen, or whether the former existence of such an inscription was merely inferred from the shape of the base. On their way down the hill, Captain Owen describes his officers as having discovered the cross itself lying on the ground, and as having been of the same breadth and thickness as the shaft itself, also with an inscription equally illegible. It was doubtless three of these pieces which were subsequently deposited in the South African Museum in 1856.

The portion of the pillar still preserved in the Museum measures about 22 in. in height, 8 in. in breadth, and  $5\frac{1}{2}$  in. thickness; it appears to taper very slightly from below upwards, and is composed of a compact hard shelly limestone, a rock which does not seem to be found near Angra Pequena but which is not uncommon in Portugal.

\* Narrative of voyages to explore the shores of Africa, Arabia, and Madagascar, performed by H.M.S. *Leven* and *Baracouta*, by Captain W. F. W. Owen. London, 2 vols., 1833, 8vo.

There can, I think, be little doubt that it, together with the two fragments now in the Geographical Museum at Lisbon, formed part of an upright pillar somewhat similar to those of Diogo Cão still in perfect condition in the same Museum, and figured in Senhor Cordeiro's Memoir which is referred to in the next section; further, that the cross was of iron, and of very much slighter dimensions and was fixed on the top of the stone pillar.

## II.—ON THE REMAINS OF THE PILLARS MARKING THE DISCOVERY OF THE WESTERN COASTS OF AFRICA PRESERVED IN THE MUSEUM OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF LISBON.

It seemed to me worth while to try and trace the subsequent history of the pieces of the cross said to have been sent to Portugal. I therefore wrote through the Colonial Office to inquire as to the whereabouts of the missing pieces, and to try and obtain at least a photograph of them. Eventually, after the elapse of nearly a year I received from Lisbon through the Imperial Foreign Office a photograph of the missing pieces, together with the following note on the Crosses or Memorial Pillars erected by the early Portuguese navigators on the western coasts of Africa, now preserved in the Museum of the Geographical Society of Lisbon.

As the note kindly prepared by Senhor Luciã Cordeiro seemed to me of considerable interest, I append here a free translation of it, for which I am greatly indebted to the kindness of Senhor Tedeschi, the Consul-General for Portugal in Cape Town. The note is as follows:—

“In the Colonial and Ethnographical Museum of the Geographical Society of Lisbon, there exist the remains of the following stone pillars erected on the West Coast of Africa, to witness and recall the early discoveries and possessions of the Portuguese.”

1. Pillar of St. Augustine, placed on the Cape, first known as that of St. Augustine, afterwards known as that of St. Maria, in 13° 27' 15" S. Lat., and 21° 38' E. Long. of Lisbon according to Castilho (*Desc. e roteira da Costa Occ. da Africa*, 1866) to the south of Benguella; this is the second pillar erected by Diogo Cão, and the last of his first voyage of discovery (1482).

On the terminal portion of the pillar the following description can be read: “Date of the Creation of the world 6881, year of our Lord Jesus Christ 1482, the very exalted very excellent and powerful King D. John the Second of Portugal caused this land to be discovered and this pillar to be placed by Diogo Cão, Groom of the Household.”



A description and explanation with figures by Luciã Cordeiro was given in a Memoir published by the Geographical Society of Lisbon.

The pillar was sent to the Museum by the Governor-General of Angola, Guilherme Capello in 1892, and was replaced by another commemorative pillar.

2. Pillar of Cape Negro erected at the Cape thus named at  $15^{\circ} 40' 30''$  S. Lat. and  $21^{\circ} 2'$  E. Long. (of Lisbon) to the south of Mosamedes.

This was the third of Diogo Cão, and the first of his second voyage of discovery (1485). The shield and the inscription thereon which occupied the faces of the terminal squared portion of the pillar are altogether obliterated. Full descriptions and explanations will be found in the above-quoted Memoir. This pillar was sent to Lisbon at the same time as the former one.

3. Pillar of St. George erected on the point at the southern side of the mouth of the Congo, which was named Point Padrao—a name which has been changed in modern English charts to Shark's Point. This was the first pillar erected by Diogo Cão during his first voyage (1482).

According to the local tradition, it was destroyed by the bullets of an English ship which used it as a target. Several fragments were collected by a ship's company, but were lost as the vessel sunk. Other fragments were taken away by the natives, and were carefully guarded by them as the talisman of the white man. In 1859 the Portuguese Government had another pillar erected on the same spot by a man-of-war. This pillar again disappeared in 1864, in consequence, according to the official tradition, of a very high tide. When in 1892 the Governor of Angola had a new pillar put up, the fragments in the possession of the natives were recovered, and these, two in number, are now to be found in the Museum, having been sent by the order of the Governor-General Guilherme Capello and his successor.

4. Pillar of Sao Thiago erected on Point Pedestal, Angra dos Ilheus (according to old Portuguese maps) in  $26^{\circ} 38'$  S. Lat. and  $24^{\circ} 11'$  E. Long. of Lisbon according to Castilho. It may here be remarked that Angra dos Ilheus is nowadays identified with Angra Pequena, but that again this last name was also applied to another bay further north—Spencer Bay of the English charts.

The name "Angra" is very common on the coast between Cabo da Serra (*i.e.*, Cape Cross) and the Orange River.

On leaving Walfisch Bay one finds Angra dos Iltheu, Angra dos

Conceicao Angra Pequena, and Angras Juntas. It was certainly along this coast that Bartholomew Diaz commenced his explorations, those of Diogo Cão having finished at Cabo da Serra, Cabo da Cruz or Cross Point, where he placed his fourth and last pillar, recently removed by the Germans, as shown in the previously quoted Memoir of Luciã Cordeiro, and in another entitled 'O ultimo padrao de Diogo Cão,' published in the Bulletin of the Geographical Society of Lisbon.

The last pillar of Diogo Cão has been in some way confused with the first one of Bartholomew Diaz. This latter was acquired in several pieces by the English from Pedestal Point near Angra Pequena.

According to Owen this pillar was destroyed at the commencement of the present century. Owen endeavoured to replace the pillar, but on account of the many pieces into which it had been broken this was found to be impossible. On two of the fragments, however, traces of an inscription were found, which were considered to be illegible.

The question is, Were these particular portions obtained when the fragments of the pillar were brought to the Cape, and are they still there? A portion, or rather two portions, which seem to have been continuous and which evidently form part of the column, are now in our Museum, having reached us from the Naval School in 1892, accompanied solely by the tradition that they formed part of the Pillar of Bartholomew Diaz, which the Portuguese Consul at the Cape, Senhor du Prat, had succeeded in obtaining there, and had sent to the Portuguese Government or to the King of Portugal, and which had then been deposited at the Museum of the Naval School. They are still in the same wooden box in which they were preserved in the Naval School, and are certainly the relics of which the British Minister has asked for a reproduction.

As has been said already, it seems to have formed part of the capital of the column, which could not have been very large and which seems to have been of the same design as those of Diogo Cão.

There is no cross or portion of a cross, and in the two best preserved pillars, those of Cape St. Augustine and of Cape Negro, one can only just make out the spot for the placing of the cross which formed the summit of the pillar and was probably made of iron, both in these (*i.e.*, Diogo Cão's) as well as in the others erected later.

It may be further worth while mentioning that the Portuguese sculptor, Victor Bastos, recently deceased, had made a sketch of considerable proportions, for a picture never completed, of the erection

of the St. Philippe memorial pillar, and that the heirs of the great sculptor have tried vainly to dispose of it. Of this picture the Geographical Society possesses a photograph.

### III.—ON THE OTHER PILLARS ERECTED BY BARTHOLOMEW DIAZ.

I have not been able to find any fuller account of Diaz' memorable voyage than that contained in Barros' \* 'Asia.' On p. 184 of the first volume of this work it is related how Diaz embarked from Lisbon in August, 1486, with two vessels of about fifty tons apiece. He took with him a supply of marble pillars to mark the successive points of his discoveries, and the first of these he set up at Pedestal Point just south of Angra Pequena.

Diaz continued his voyage, landing at a place he named Angra das Voltas, of uncertain position, but probably in the neighbourhood of the Orange River, a point just south of which is called Cape Voltas to this day.

After this he was driven away from land by a storm, and did not again touch the coast till he reached a bay, which he named Angra dos Vaqueiros, which is probably one of the bays between Cape Agulhas and Knysna. He next proceeded along the coast as far as Algoa Bay, where, on an island now called St. Croix, he again erected a second pillar.

Finally he proceeded a little further to the mouth of a considerable river, either the Fish or Kowie, and then, owing to the protestations of his crew, he turned back along the coast, discovering and naming Cabo Tormentoso, which was on his return to Portugal renamed by King John the Second, Cabo de Boa Esperanca, or the Cape of Good Hope, now generally known as Cape Point. Here also he is stated by Barros to have erected a third pillar, which he dedicated to St. Philippe, and to which allusion is made above.

Regarding the identification of the island in Algoa Bay with the island on which Diaz landed, there seems to be considerable doubt. According to Barros, the island is described as a rocky one, and to have had on it two springs of fresh water; the island of St. Croix, on the other hand, is perfectly flat and sandy, and has no spring on it; furthermore, it is very close to the mainland, and not an island such as would be likely to be first met with by a vessel entering Algoa Bay. There is no trace, and no tradition of a trace of the existence of a pillar on the island: it is, therefore, extremely improbable that it was on St. Croix that Diaz landed, and it remains to be discovered

\* 'Da Asia de Joao de Barros e de Diogo de Conto.' Nov. ed. Lisbon, 1788.



what island on the south coast of the Colony best agrees with the description given in Barros. For the description of the island of St. Croix, and for the suggestion of the doubt of its identification with the *Ihle da Santa Cruz* of Diaz I am indebted to a note kindly communicated to me by the Rev. J. A. Hewitt, of Port Elizabeth, but so far I am unable to suggest any alternative island better fitting the facts as recorded in history.

IV.—RECAPITULATION OF THE PILLARS MARKING THE DISCOVERY OF THE PORTUGUESE NAVIGATORS AT THE END OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

1. *Pillar of St. George.*

First pillar erected by Diogo Cão on his first voyage in Lat. 6° S. at Shark's Point, just south of the mouth of the Congo in 1482. Two fragments of this pillar are in the Geographical Museum at Lisbon.

2. *Pillar of St. Augustine.*

Second pillar erected by Diogo Cão on his first voyage in Lat. 13° 27' S., just south of Benguela in Angola in 1482. This pillar is now preserved in the Geographical Museum at Lisbon.

3. *Pillar of Cape Negro.*

First pillar erected by Diogo Cão on his second voyage in Lat. 15° 40' S., just south of Mossamedes in Angola in 1485. This pillar is also preserved in the Museum at Lisbon.

4. *Pillar of Cape Cross.*

Second pillar erected by Diogo Cão on his second voyage in Lat. 22° S., north of Walfisch Bay, in 1485, marking his extreme southern point. This pillar is preserved in the Marine Academy at Kiel, and a reproduction of it has been placed by the Emperor of Germany on its original situation.

5. *Pillar of Sao Thiago.*

First pillar erected by Bartholomew Diaz at Pedestal Point in Lat. 27° S. in 1487. One fragment of this is now in the South African Museum, two fragments in the Geographical Museum at Lisbon.

*6. Pillar of Santa Cruz.*

Second pillar erected by Bartholomew Diaz on the island, usually, but probably erroneously, identified with St. Croix Island in Algoa Bay, in 1487. No traces of this pillar have hitherto been found.

*7. Pillar of Sao Philippe.*

Third pillar erected by Bartholomew Diaz in the neighbourhood of Cape Point. Of this, too, no traces appear to be still in existence.